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TAGS: [ECON](#) [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [IS](#) [ISRAELI](#) [PALESTINIAN AFFAIRS](#)

SUBJECT: ISA CHIEF DISKIN SAYS HAMAS TO DO WELL IN PA ELECTIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary: NEA A/S David Welch and DAPNSA Elliott Abrams met on January 12 met with Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) Chief Yuval Diskin, who gave an assessment of the January 25 Palestinian elections and developments inside Fatah and Hamas. Diskin said that the most probable election scenario would be Hamas winning 35-40 percent of the vote. He said that Hamas wants to take over the Ministries of Health, Education, and Welfare, which would allow them to strengthen the organization,s capabilities and to finance activities in both Gaza and the West Bank, but is content to leave the peace process to Mahmud Abbas. Diskin said that worried Fatah activists have come to him or otherwise sent messages to the Shin Bet, asking that the GOI help postpone the elections. Diskin said that anarchy on election day could derail the vote. He expects, nonetheless, that there will be an election and indicated that Shin Bet is looking carefully at "day after" scenarios. End summary.

Hamas to do well in PA elections

2. (C) NEA A/S David Welch and DAPNSA Elliott Abrams met January 12 with Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) Chief Yuval Diskin to hear the Israeli assessment regarding the January 25 Palestinian elections and developments inside Fatah and Hamas. Diskin said that the Palestinian municipal elections, where Hamas did well, could be a predictor of results in the January 25 voting. He said the most probable result is Hamas winning 35-40 percent. A scenario that is also probable is Hamas winning either a majority or getting enough seats to form a formidable block, he said. The least likely result, Diskin said, would be Hamas getting less than 25 percent of the vote. Based on the fact that Hamas currently has no seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council and likely will receive 30-40 percent, Diskin said that Hamas will be the "winner" in the elections. And once in, he said, Hamas will increase its influence. Diskin said that Hamas could technically form a coalition with left wing candidates, who could win seven seats. He said that Mustafa Barghouti,s faction looks set to win six seats, and Salam Fayyad,s would win several as well, but will align with Fatah. Diskin said that Fatah may do well in the national proportional elections, but will lose badly in regional (district) voting. He believes that 6-12 seats are still up for grabs, while one poll puts as many as 40 seats in that category.

3. (C) Diskin said that it is not clear how soon after the elections Hamas will enter the PA. Intelligence shows that Hamas, goal is to take over the Ministries of Health, Education, and Welfare, which would allow them to strengthen the organization,s capabilities and to finance activities in both Gaza and the West Bank. He said that Hamas is content to leave the peace process to Mahmud Abbas, but Abbas will have to take into consideration Hamas, position. Diskin said that Mahmud Abbas is a weak leader with no party apparatus and contrasted that with Hamas, which is well organized and operates based on compromises with its headquarters in Damascus.

Fatah Activists Approached GOI to Postpone Elections

4. (C) Diskin said that Fatah is fearful as the election approaches. Most activists are very worried about the results, with the older generation afraid they will lose their seats and younger candidates concerned about losing to Hamas in the regional elections. Diskin said that senior Fatah activists have been coming to Shin Bet, as well as communicating through back channels, to convey their message of concern. He said that these activists want the GOI to "do their dirty work" and postpone the elections. For example, Diskin said, a worried Muhammad Dahlan came to see him a few days earlier seeking help from Israel,s political leadership in postponing the elections. Diskin said that Dahlan told him that according to Dahlan,s polls, Fatah would receive 52 seats and Hamas would receive 50-52 seats. Meanwhile, a confident Hamas, Diskin said, wants the elections to take place on schedule.

5. (C) Diskin said that the one Fatah leader that wants the elections to be held as planned is Marwan Barghouti, who will

"win" in any scenario. Diskin said that Barghouti will likely be the most important Fatah figure coming out of the elections, and the jailed activist thinks his victory in the elections could lead to his release. Diskin said, however, that he is not sure that Barghouti has a good picture of the situation on the ground, despite the flow of visitors the jailed activist has received.

16. (C) Diskin said that anarchy on election day could cause the situation to deteriorate quickly and keep the elections from being held. He said that it is unclear how rebel factions, such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad, will act on election day. Diskin said that Hamas wants to get an agreement from these groups that they will keep the situation calm so that the elections can go ahead.

Hamas May Have to Deal with Terror Policy

17. (C) Diskin said that if Hamas does well in the elections, it might have to deal with its terror policy and modify it. (Interestingly, he also said, but did not dwell on it, that if Hamas did poorly "less than 25 percent" it might revert to violence.) Hamas will have to be more disciplined and sophisticated. Diskin predicted that Hamas would want a "good price" to give up terror, such as legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. He said that no one should recognize Hamas until they agree to abandon terrorism and disarm. Diskin said he does not believe that Hamas will agree to disarm its military wing, but it might try to downplay the display of weapons and tell activists not to carry arms on the street. He said that Hamas is likely to stay quiet and not carry out terrorist attacks for the next few months. Nevertheless, Hamas is worried that it could lose young activists to the global jihad. He admitted he was very focused on the period before the Israeli elections, and thought that Hamas would continue its quiet during this period.

18. (C) Diskin said that the GOI will have to be cautious about how it reacts if rockets are launched or if militants carry out an attack. He offered that the situation is very sensitive because there is a new prime minister and the public is watching what he will do.

Anarchy in Gaza

19. (C) Diskin said that there is real anarchy in Gaza and the Palestinian security forces are helpless. Diskin said that Hamas is trying to export to the West Bank its know-how on building rockets and tries to smuggle suicide bombers to Israel, although the ISA has had good success in blocking them. He also said that Hamas is digging a tunnel to the Karni passage in order to blow it up. Diskin said that there are a lot of problems in Rafah and weapons are being smuggled in from Sinai. He said that the Egyptians promise to stop the smuggling, but do nothing.

110. (C) A/S Welch and DPNSA Abrams have cleared this cable.

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